through the years

special yearbook edition

LOCO MAG

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Loco Mag's 30th issue Yearbook Edition! When we looked at our calendars and noticed that we've been publishing for five years, we here at Loco put our brains together and after lots of weird ideas, decided to put out a print version of Loco. This is a first for us, which means that you're basically holding a piece of history. Be careful with it. Don't put it down in any liquids. Store it at 73 degrees fahrenheit. Don't set it on fire unless you're making a cool statement.

A lot of people have collaborated to make Loco happen these past 30 issues. It's no small feat, especially for students who have essays to write, tests to study for, and math books to cry over. The amount of work that goes into publishing an issue every month is a little staggering, but we've always had a team of enthusiastic, weird, passionate people to help.

That's why we've decided to show off all the cool things we've worked so hard on. Printed on these pages are all of the current staff's best work from the past six issues. So dive in, have a read, and then visit locomag.com for more of what we do best.

Helen Armstrong
Editor in Chief

Special thanks to our graphic designer, Brie Kimble and to Kristen Stedman and Kirby Sibiski for their help with the layout, and to Michael Dwyer for his guidance.

Helen Armstrong is a junior Print Communications major. When she grows up she wants to be either Willow from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, or a writer, whichever comes first. Her dream is to take down the patriarchy and write things that are a) entertaining, b) refreshing, and c) not heteronormative. She's editor-in-chief at Loco and tweets a mix of weird stuff and political rants @helenkarmstrong.

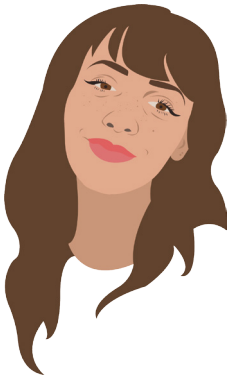
Sarah Adeniran is a Nigerian-American writer, videographer, and musician. She is grateful for the talents and gifts that have been given to her, but ultimately her identity is found in the One who made her, saved her, and loves her - Jesus Christ, the Son of God. While she loves her many talents and gifts, she considers her relationship with Christ to be her greatest reward. And it is always a great moment when even one of these gifts of hers points to her Reward.

Kristen Stedman is a tea-addict, space fanatic, and will never turn down an outdoorsy excursion. She has been working with Loco Mag as the travel section editor since September 2016. During her time on the team, she started a column called "The Restless Student's Travel Guide," a gospel for the busy, broke, travel-bug infected college student. Though Kristen will be taking a brief hiatus from her position to study abroad in London, she looks forward to continuing to contribute articles and to re-joining the team in January. To read live updates on her misadventures while abroad (Which hopefully don't involve getting scammed by a mime again), follow her on twitter: @CuddlyKris

Kirby Sibiski is a junior at Arcadia University where he studies print communications. He is the copy editor for Loco Mag and has been on staff since Fall of 2015. A lifelong Manchester United supporter, Kirby has both coached and played the beautiful game. You are likely to find him watching Comedy Central or Adult Swim, and listening to Joy Division, Pulp, or The Smiths (and, of course, many others).

Austin Zotomayor is a student at Arcadia University majoring in print Communications. He has experience in video, audio, and article writing. He has contributed many articles to Loco Mag both in the past and currently.

STAFF



Lana Valente is a sophomore Communications major/Italian minor and she has mastered the art of incorporating a warm personality into her bio for this print edition of the magazine. At least, she hopes so. She is a professional tea-drinker, tea-spiller, meme-lover, and book enthusiast. She has worked on LocoMag as an editor and the social media coordinator for two years now (livin' la vida Loco).

Samantha Winston is a senior at Arcadia University, who spends her time baking and thinking of all the places she wants to travel. She has written for Loco Mag for several years and is currently the entertainment editor. She is graduating this May.

Sulamar Bagnell is a senior video communications major at Arcadia University. He enjoys sports, making music, and the finer things life has to offer. He prefers to live life as if you'll die tomorrow, and dream as if you'll live forever.

Sophie Carroll is a global media studies major at Arcadia University aspiring to go into music business management once she graduates in 2019. You can typically find her at the latest concert in town or sipping on a can of Diet Coke and hanging out with her cat Frankie. For great memes and sassy tweets follow her on twitter @sophieeee182

Callie Burgoyne is a book, coffee, music, and travel enthusiast. Enjoys exploring new places and late night car rides with the windows down and the music up. Occasional poet and writer of things. Her twitter is @callieburgoyne

Eric McInnis is a goofy weirdo just trying to figure things out. He aspires to write about the entertainment industry and the cool and wacky things the industry gives viewers, particularly in film and television. He doesn't care what you believe in or what you think is right or wrong, so long as you don't annoy him or act stupid. He also really, really likes food. His twitter is @ emcinniseric.

My Features, Your Fetish

Sarah Adeniran, originally published October 17, 2016

I specifically remember him telling me he had never been with a black girl before, and that I 'wasn't like most black girls.' He ended up using me for sexual pleasure, which I didn't realize he was doing until after the summer had passed. He made me think we were in a relationship. I was the girl that took his virginity. Then school started again, and he stopped talking to me. -Tayana, 20

I first became aware of the white boy my junior year in high school. I had my first encounter with one who marveled at my blackness at age 18. Since then, it's been a whirlwind of requests to pat my hair, comments on my dark skin tone, and hungry stares that pierce me as far as the Motherland. What seemed to me to be a new phenomenon has been a rampant form of degradation since before We were even brought over. The fetishization of the Black woman lives on not only in the experiences of myself and my Sisters, not simply in our popular culture, but has found its beginnings in our very history.

The Beginnings: A Saartjie "Sara" Baartman Story

It began with her birth in 1789, on the landscape of—-what is now called—-Eastern Cape, South Africa. Sara Baartman, born on a colonial farm, belonged to the Khoikhoi tribe. The Khoikhoi were a nomadic people, hunting and gathering, living peaceably amongst one another until the arrival of the Dutch lead to an ongoing series of conquest and murder. With the death of her mother in her infancy, and the murder of her father, Sara was orphaned by the time she reached adolescence.

Now on her own, the young teen found companionship in the form of a Khoikhoi man whom she married and had a son with. Their son unfortunately did not survive long after birth. Left with no one else in her life but her husband, Baartman's string of tragic losses reached its finale with his murder. Officially alone and with colonization on the rise, Sara was sold into slavery.

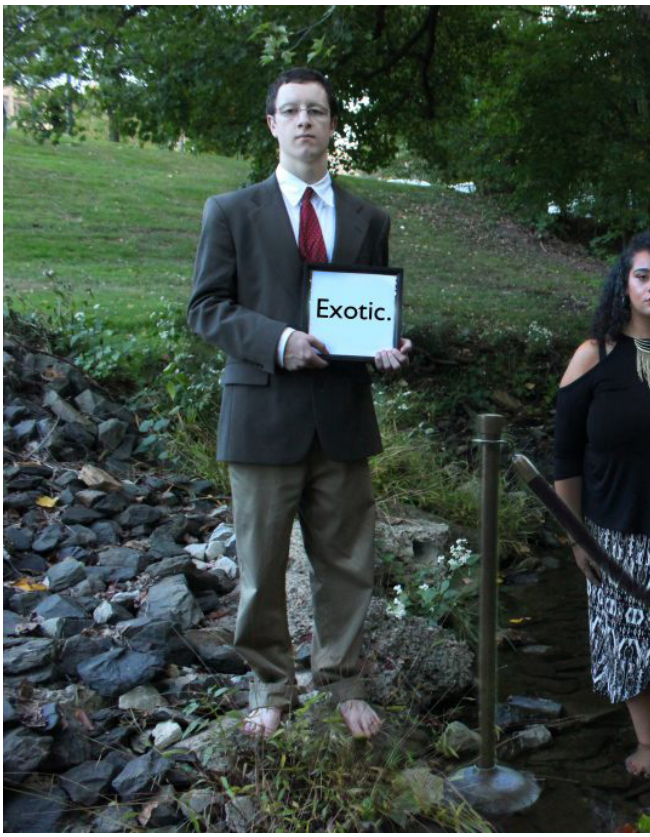
Sara was taken to Cape Town by her trader Pieter Willem Cesar, where she worked as a domestic servant to his brother Hendrik and received her name Sara (the diminutive of the Dutch name "Saartjie). There, she was contacted by William Dunlop, a ship surgeon and friend of the Cesar brothers, whose primary intent was to reap the most of Sara's servitude. In October of 1810, the illiterate servant "signed" a contract with Dunlop and Cesar that would change her life and diminish her worth forever.

The alleged verbal agreements of Baartman's contract stated that she would be taken over to London to continue her work as a domestic servant, perform as an entertainer, and even receive monetary compensation for her work. Soon after her arrival in London, however, Baartman would come to realize that her new hot job was a lot less humble than its description.

You see, like most Khoikhoi women, Baartman had very large breasts, even more massive buttocks (called steatopygia), and elongated genitals. This was very normal for her, yet a stark contrast from the European

woman's body. Around this time, Europeans had an almost obsessive speculation about Khoikhoi women. There had only been rumors in Europe of these women, but very few people had ever seen them for themselves. So when Dunlop and the Cesar had gotten themselves into some money troubles, they knew that Baartman could be their way to riches.

They marketed her as the "Hottentot Venus." Under her new stage name, Sara performed in London's Piccadilly Circus where she was exhibited as a freak-show attraction. Londoners, male and female, would come and watch the half-naked 21 year old crawl out of her cage and perform elaborate routines and dances for hours at a time. She'd often perform private shows for the more wealthy men and women, where they'd poke, touch, caress, and gawk at her body parts. Eventually, Sara's human freak show acts would attract attention beyond her usual sexually ravenous, self-seeking spectators. With the Slave Trade Act of 1807 passing just a few years before Baartman had arrived in London, British abolitionists were following her story closely and with every intent of taking her traders to court. They succeeded, but all Sara got out of their attempt to end her glorified slavery was rights to slightly less degrading performance-wear, not freedom. Her career continued.



After the death of Dunlop, the reality of Baartman's bondage proceeded to prove itself more true. In 1814, she was transported to France and sold to an animal trainer named S. Reaux. In his

hands, she received the full circus animal treatment. Reaux would take her mostly naked body all around France, cage her, and display her next to a baby rhinoceros. She was even told to "sit" and "stand," as a trained animal would.

This amusing showcase attracted men like George Cuvier, a naturalist

who worked for the Museum of Natural History and was bent on studying Baartman's body for science. Cuvier was convinced that Baartman was the final piece of the puzzle in his research. Baartman was given over to a plethora of anatomists and physiologists who, with Cuvier, "confirmed" his theory that the link between animals and humans was found in her.

After six years of having men degrade, exhibit, and trespass against her body, Baartman finally died at the age of 26, due to alcoholism, smallpox, or pneumonia. Though her cross-over should have been her shot at "peace," not even death could release Baartman from her seemingly eternal bondage and humiliation. In the most literal sense, her lifeless body, which was taken and dissected by Cuvier, was preserved and contained in jars for display. Cuvier made a plaster cast of her body and kept her brain, genitalia and skeleton preserved. These remains of Baartman were taken to the Museum of Man for her body to be a subject of speculation and objectification forevermore.

I'll stop writing poems about racism when white men no longer see me as an exotic conquest. -Shani Carrington, 'Another Racism Poem'

My Body, Your Orient

Though nightmarish and upsetting, what happened to Sara Baartman is not a rarity. It is a result of colonialism and "Othering."

Othering, a means of classifying groups or individuals who do not conform to the societal norms of the one classifying (the Self), was how the Western world did (and still does) life. In colonialism, othering served its purposes. It was the way by which Europeans would justify their harsh treatment of marginalized groups. Colonizers would come into foreign territory, wreak havoc on the land, murder a number of people, and keep and teach the rest. "The Other" in this scenario is then labeled as savage and uncivilized, and therefore is meant to be controlled and educated. The civilized, domesticated colonizer, on the other hand, is vindicated.

So when the sexually "unusual" Baartman was coaxed into a glamourous form of slavery, violated and ridiculed because of her body, worked until the point of death, and then bottled and conserved for public display, her traders, trainers, and perpetrators were justified because she was the Other.

Polish sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman writes in his book, Modernity and Ambivalence:

> *Woman is the other of man, animal is the other of human, stranger is the other of native, abnormality is the other of norm...*

In Baartman's case, and in the case of many African women like her, she was the all encompassing other––the woman, the animal, the stranger, the abnormality.

Theoretically, the Other cannot exist without the Self, and the Self relies on the existence of the Other. Othering is a means of self-identification for both groups. For the Self, othering is a means of establishing power and dominance. The Other, however only views him or herself through the lense of the Self.

In his 1978 book Orientalism, Edward Said, philosopher and literary critic at Columbia University, uses the theory of Self and Other to explain the relationship between the West (Europe) and the East (the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and North Africa). The West would often fetishize the East, making sweeping generalizations of the area with little to no prior knowledge. They "Othered" the East, or "the Orient."

Essentially, the Orient was any unknown place that wasn't the West. It signified all that was captivating and strange. In Said's work, of course, it is Eastern culture. This process of othering would play a key role in how Western politics, philosophy, art, and media would portray the East––as rudimentary and weak.

Similarly, Africa was to Europe as the East was to the West. The Dark Continent, mysterious yet enticing, was Europe's "Orient." They knew little of the Motherland so they Othered it. By this, their men were made the standard of all that is cultivated and good, while the women of Africa were boiled down to being primeval sex incarnates––-there to be indulged in and inspected, but never respected.

Pop Culture Vulture

Now fast forward two centuries and not much has changed. From music, to television, to art––for goodness' sake––the almost neurotic fascination with the Black woman (her physical attributes, her sexuality, her "exoticness") is all too prominent.

Take Jean Paul Goude for example. The world-renowned French photographer is most noted, and most criticized, for his work with black women––specifically with his former girlfriend Grace Jones. Most of his photographs depict black women, usually nude but clad in chicken grease (probably) and at least one carnival-esque ornament, striking unnatural poses. And with most of these prints following the same theme––black shiny woman with leg up, black shiny woman with back bent, black shiny woman with breast out––one could easily assume he is obsessed with the

Black woman. But one doesn't have to, because Goude already admitted it himself in his 1979 interview with People magazine:

From the moment he saw West Side Story and the Alvin Ailey dance troupe, he found himself captivated by 'ethnic minorities—black girls, PRs. I had jungle fever.' He now says, 'Blacks are the premise of my work.'

This "jungle fever" of his shows itself very disturbingly in one of his most famous photographs of Jones growling in a cage (much like a jungle animal). The words on the cage read "Do not feed the animal."

And if the comparison between a human being and a wild jungle specimen weren't awful enough, Goude has got Jones posing on a stage with flashy curtains, indicating that her naked body is meant to be viewed. Again, we see the freak show concept of Baartman's time rearing it's objectifying head. And again, the concept of Self and Other shines through: Jones is very dark, Goude is not. Goude is enticed by Jones' Blackness yet fails to understand it in relation to himself. Goude must make the distinction between himself and Jones to understand his own identity and assert his power. Goude deems Jones an animal and calls it art. A naive Jones allows it and calls it modeling.

Artists, and people, like Goude are often so entangled in their covert racism that they fall into thinking that they're doing black women some sort of favor by showcasing our bodies in this manner. It's getting us noticed and we should be flattered that white men will even look at us, I presume their argument to be. But this kind of exploitation only perpetuates the dehumanization and hypersexualization of the Black female body.
It furthers the fantasy of Black women—-and Blacks in general—-being savage-like and makes us a point of sexual fascination. It tells the onlooker (most literally in the case of Jones' photograph) that we are not to be viewed as individuals with any sort of value, but as animals. This is a twisted form of representation.

We often hold the idea that art is meant to be appreciated—-even art that is controversial. But there is a fine line between appreciation and fetishization. Whereas the Merriam-Webster definition of appreciation is the, "ability to understand the worth, quality, or importance of something," fetishization is the act of making something an object of sexual fascination; placing an unrestrainable fixation upon something. Racial fetishization is just that, except the "something," now becomes an ethnic group of people.

All Hail Queen Bey

This oversexualized portrayal of the Black woman in popular culture is not simply limited to photographic art, but is just as rampant among many of our most beloved figures.

Take Beyonce, for example. The Black American singer/songwriter, record producer, and actress is one of the most influential and well-known pop culture figures in the world. She's sold over 16 million albums in the US, 100 million worldwide, and has a net worth estimate of $450 million.

In 2013, she made the Time 100 list, and Australian film director, Baz Luhrmann wrote:

No one has that voice, no one moves the way she moves, no one can hold an audience the way she does . . . When Beyoncé does an album, when Beyoncé sings a song, when Beyoncé does anything, it's an event, and it's broadly influential.

Have you ever wondered why that is? What is it about Beyonce that makes her so much more influential than other talented Black female artists like Jennifer Hudson, Erykah Badu, or even her former Destiny's Child groupmate, Kelly Rowland?

Beyonce has got the talent, for sure. But apart from her incredible voice, huge stage presence, and overall charm, why is she that much more popular with white America–even white males–than any of the previously mentioned Black females?

I've got a speculation, and it has everything to do with racial fetishization. Beyonce is Black, and white America loves that! They love her Black voice, they love her Black curves, they love her uncommon name. But unlike other Black females artists, Beyonce is just the right Black for America. She's got all the entertainment purposes that America wants out of a Black woman, yet her light skin and long blonde hair keep her at just the right balance of Black and acceptable.

I think if she were a shade darker and her hair wasn't golden blonde, she wouldn't have the same ap ppeal or influence as she does.
-Summer, 20

I'd love for these conclusions about our culture's view of Black women to be far from reality, but history, society, and the personal experiences of Black women like myself has, sadly proven otherwise. As the Black teen actress and activist, Amandla Stenberg, put it, "Black features are beautiful. Black women are not."

This Is Why Racial Fetishization Is Problematic

The remarks about my Afro-textured hair, the admiration of my ancestral physique, the comments on my dark skin all cease to become compliments once they are made points of fixation—especially in an age and a culture where I am otherwise hated for these things. It is often not the Black woman who is loved, but rather the things about her.

I think about that last sentence and I'm reminded of a time in my late teens when a white male pursued me with great persistence after he had come out of a relationship with his first one of Us. After that, I watched him chase after One just a shade lighter than me and then Another just a shade lighter than Her. Yet it wasn't me, or the Second, or the Third that he was looking for. He simply wanted the experience. He wanted our Blackness.

We were his Orient.

In an age where a Black Nicki Minaj is celebrated in music videos for her booty and a Black Beyonce is worshipped in concert for her beauty, it is easy to turn a blind eye to the years of racial exploitation that got these women here, and mistake white America's newfound obsession for love. But as the history of the Black woman tells, our bodies were never intended for love, but rather for selfish gain.

I do not need your acceptance to know that [I am beautiful]. I'm much more than my . . . ability to be romantic or sexual. I . . . a confident black women, I will sport my sexuality for myself. By myself for myself.
-Rochelle Peterson, Cultural Foundations Professor, Arcadia University

I Want To Believe: Extra-Terrestrial

Mulder, it's me. We've got a case.

Lana Valente, originally published March 2017

perhaps the crown jewel of all conspiracies, the aliens capstone; in a sea of UFO sightings, ancient astronaut theories, and paranormal TV shows, the stories are truly endless. Unfortunately, between The X-Files, James Cameron, and pop culture, science fiction became a familiar joke of sorts- something to kid about, a not-so-serious hypothesis about our future, and perhaps... our past.

As a result, we tend to forget that our universe is far more extensive than we care to recognize.

From Roswell and Area 51, foreign bacteria to the Greys, we're here to debunk, discover, and discuss. I'm going to give you some history, share some stories, but ultimately, this question is something only you can answer: are extraterrestrials real?

These are by no means the only theories out there, nor are they the absolute best of the best; I can't decide that for you, but

I can show you what I believe is interesting and worth sharing.

"Not every discovery has been announced."
-Dr Farouk El Baz, NASA Scientist

Aliens, while a popular topic of discussion, are considered to be somewhat taboo. Either way you look at the subject, it's controversial; believers versus non-believers. There are those who say that aliens traveled to Earth to build the pyramids and thus, helped to shape our history. There are those who do not. Maybe UFOs are just military test flights. Maybe they're not. E.T. phone home and all that good stuff.

Similarly, to some of you, I'm sure I lowkey come across as a psychopath- what with my conspiracy-based column and whatnot.
But hey, you wouldn't be reading this if you (or I) cared about that.

I'll start with a bombshell, because here in Philly, we go big or go home. Now, close your eyes- actually, don't. Keep reading, but imagine: you are a die-hard believer in the theory that life does NOT exist outside of Earth. According to you, it never has, and it never will. Science fiction movies are shameful, and E.T. is the most harmful children's film to ever have been made. (What a killjoy you are!) So, with this in mind, what would you do if I told you that a NASA scientist claims to have fossilized evidence of bacterial life- found only inside of a rare class of meteorites?

Marshall Space Flight Center's Richard Hoover argues that alien life does, in fact, exist- and proof has been on Earth for years. In the March 2011 edition of the Journal of Cosmology, Hoover wrote that the Orgueil meteorite contains so-called "indigenous fossils" of microorganisms.

The Orgueil meteorite is a non-metallic meteorite that did not melt during its descent into the atmosphere. While the parent body may have been modified, the

broken piece that fell in Orgueil was not damaged; thus, it falls into a meteor class consisting of mostly primitively understood meteorites. It fell near Orgueil, France, on May 14, 1864.

The Orgueil meteorite was recovered and examined by scientists, who found the unmodified fragment unusual- most fallen meteorites are melted or otherwise affected. The nature of the fragment initially led them to believe that bacterial life within the interior of the meteorite may be a possibility. The theory was debated and eventually dismissed, although the discussion resurfaced a century later.

Hoover proposed that, "The complex filaments found embedded in the Orgueil meteorite represent the remains of indigenous microfossils of cyanobacteria."

I know. What on Earth does that mean?

Basically, the filaments he discovered fixed in the meteorite are "micro-fossils of extraterrestrial life forms"- at least, so he claims. Supposedly, these fossils were embedded in the meteor prior to the meteor's entry into the Earth's atmosphere. While this shockingly candid statement also, by extension, suggests that life on comets is a possibility, Hoover stands by his claim. He has been written off as histrionic, but his theory holds water- although the validity of his paper has been questioned.

Whether you believe Hoover's theory or not, it opens the floodgates for not dozens, not hundreds, but thousands of extraterrestrial theories. There's so much more for you to know. For that reason, whether this information will be useful to you later or not, I've condensed some Real Fun Stuff™ for you to dissect. I could've done the whole piece like this, but where's the fun in that? Some things need elaboration.

Below is a list of some quick definitions and summaries, and those are followed by some super fun conspiracies still boggling the world today! Are you ready? Let's

dive in.

What is the SETI Institute? SETI stands for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. SETI researchers seek evidence of extraterrestrial life; their current focus of study is to pursue some technological signature that could be sent by other intelligent lifeforms. They believe that, based on our knowledge of the origins of life on Earth, "given a suitable environment and sufficient time, life will develop on other planets." Researchers say that whether these extraterrestrials will blossom into intelligence may be speculated, but if there is such a civilization, its signature could be detected over vast distances in space. Thus, discovering such a race is SETI's goal.

Jodie Foster actually starred in a movie as a SETI employee- it's called Contact, if you're interested. Moving on.

What about Area 51? Area 51 is generally known to be an army testing facility, but rumors have spread about its suspicious secrecy. It is widely believed to be a UFO test site, the place at which alien autopsies are conducted, and an experimental platform where crashed extraterrestrial spacecraft are reverse engineered for our own military. It lies near Nevada State Route 375, otherwise known as the Extraterrestrial Highway. Who knows what happens there?

What are the Greys? The Greys are grey extraterrestrial creatures, named for their skin tone. They are otherwise known as "Alien Greys", "Roswell Greys", and "Zeta Reticulans". Their existence is debated upon and often discussed in "ufological, paranormal, and New Age" communities. If they were to exist, their name suggests they hail from the Zeta Reticuli star system, which lies in the southern constellation of Reticulum. The Greys are often associated with alien abductions.

Why are you wasting my time?
I don't know, why are you still reading?

Armed with this new knowledge,

allow me to redirect your attention to front and center stage, as I'm going to present to you:

ALIEN CONSPIRACIES!!

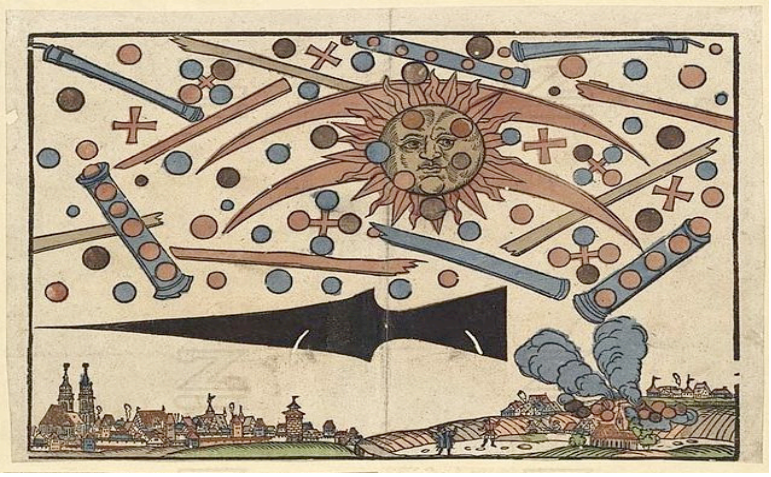
** tears up ** I'm in my prime.

It's difficult to pick a starting point, so we'll work chronologically. Have you ever heard of ancient astronauts?

Cue the eye rolls - but no, this is a real, complex theory. They even made a show about it on the History Channel called Ancient Aliens, which I'm sure you've heard of; there are memes about it. However, if you haven't studied up on modern memeology, then maybe this is news to you.

The ancient astronaut theory is a pseudoscientific concept- pseudoscience is a system of beliefs that are incorrectly regarded as scientific. For example, astronomy is a science, but astrology is considered to be a pseudoscience. So, with that in mind...

Ancient astronaut theorists contend that at some point in our history, intelligent extraterrestrial creatures visited Earth and not only established contact with humans, but actively participated in major events in antiquity. Such related events are the building of the Great Pyramids of Giza, Stonehenge, Pumapunku, and the like. Theorists go so far to even suggest that great battles were fought amongst rival E.T.s in the sky, above human settlements, resulting in evidence reflected in art made by humans themselves.



One particularly famous example is the aerial conflict of 1561 over Nuremberg, Germany. Supposedly, hundreds of people witnessed unidentified flying objects foreign even to our technology today. According to eyewitness reports,

the battle lasted for one hour, and at the conclusion, the remaining aircraft flew towards the sun and disappeared.

Unfortunately, we're not covering the vast subject that is UFO's today. That's for another time. The point is, ancient alien "experts" basically suggest, through all of their theorizing, that we are missing major chapters in our history... Which, surprise surprise, coincides with Species with Amnesia. But I digress.

Skip forward a few hundred years, to Roswell, New Mexico. On July 7th, 1947, a ranch owner named Mac Brazel discovered an unusual object in his sheep pasture. According to History.com, what he found was an incomprehensible "mess of metallic sticks held together with tape; chunks of plastic and foil reflectors; and scraps of a heavy, glossy, paper-like material." The papery materials were resistant to tearing, and the metal was surprisingly lightweight. As Brazel was unable to identify what the crashed craft was, he called Roswell's sheriff. The sheriff, equally stumped, called the Roswell Army Air Force base. The base was nearby, and soon Air Force soldiers gathered the debris from Brazel's field. They took it away in armored trucks.
On July 8th, the news station for Roswell, the Roswell Daily Record, had featured a front-page story on the incident. "RAAF (Roswell Army Air Force) Captures Flying Saucer on Ranch in Roswell Region."

It sparked curiosity among inhabitants living in the otherwise unassuming town.

The very next day, on July 9, the news report had been amended. According to an Air Force official, "The alleged 'flying saucer' was only a crashed weather balloon."

Ah, how lowly the government thinks of us, how simple-minded. It was said by witnesses that, to anyone who had seen the wreckage, whatever it was, it was certainly no weather balloon. Many people suggested-and several still believe- that the crashed craft was not Earthly in origin. They concluded that the craft "must have come from an alien spaceship," thus explaining why it was carted away so quickly and secretly, as well as the blatant lie about it being a weather

balloon- which it clearly was not. The Roswell incident is famous for the skepticism associated with it, and since, it has opened the door for extraterrestrial theorists to share their beliefs with less scrutiny than before.

"To my mathematical brain, the numbers alone make thinking about aliens perfectly rational."
-Stephen Hawking

Now, part of this theory happened before Roswell, and the rest happened after, so... Whatever. Another notable theory is the Black Knight Satellite.

Way back in 1899, Nikola Tesla believed that he had heard from aliens.

What a way to begin, right? Tesla was a brilliant inventor, credited with the Tesla coil, experiments with x-rays and short-range radio communication. For a time, he lived in Colorado Springs to work on wireless power. While Tesla was toying with it, he instead may have received a message from an otherworldly source.

A reporter from the Albany Telegram interviewed Tesla in 1923. During the conversation, Tesla revealed his experience.

"I have a deep conviction that highly intelligent beings exist on Mars. While experimenting in Colorado, I obtained extraordinary experimental evidence of the existence of life on Mars. I had perfected a wireless receiver of extraordinary sensitiveness, far beyond anything known, and I caught signals which I interpreted as meaning 1-2-3-4. I believe the Martians used numbers for communication because numbers are universal."

While Tesla was deeply respected in his field, his revelations about martian contact brought doubt and scrutiny from his peers. His claims were dismissed as a publicity stunt, but in the years since, the Tesla Society has suggested the possibility of Tesla receiving radio waves from deep space or even static interference from Jupiter's massive storms.

Whatever the case, years later, another theory was formed. This claim suggested that what Tesla intercepted was 13,000 year old extraterrestrial artifact. This object was supposedly in orbit around Earth, and it has since adopted the name of the Black Knight Satellite.

The Black Knight Satellite actually doesn't have its own independent history, but rather a compilation of stories sharing the single similarity of a UFO trapped in Earth's orbit. The beginnings of the legend are unknown in origin, but it has remained a constant feature in alien lore, from Tesla to the launch of the International Space Station.

In the 1960s, TIME magazine wrote about the discovery of an object in polar orbit, which should've been impossible, as both the US and Soviet satellites at the time were in equatorial orbit. The US Department of Defense later claimed that the mystery object was identified as debris from the Discoverer satellite. It was written off by professionals, but not by the public.

Then, in 1998, the Space Shuttle Endeavor photographed this image, depicting a strange black object hanging over Earth.

Real or not, it looks like something straight out of a science fiction film. Ominous.

In terms of conspiracies, the less there is known and understood about something, the more intriguing it becomes. If the Black Knight Satellite is a receptor for alien communication, count me out.

Next up: Project Blue Book.

Surprisingly, the government was fairly transparent with Project Blue Book, taking into account how important confidentiality in government missions usually is. It was a systematic study of every reported case of alleged extraterrestrial contact and spacecraft. In a sense, it was an experiment to test whether anyone could provide substantial proof of alien interaction. Supposedly, this conspiracy also goes hand-in-hand with the Men in Black.

The Men in Black are dogs for the government's alien-related dirty work; witnesses of extraterrestrial phenomena claim to have been threatened into secrecy by suited agents. Hard-core conspiracy theorists believe that the Men in Black are everywhere in disguise; going so far as to suggest that they might even be aliens themselves. My guess is, we'll never know for sure.

Lastly- yes, you made it!- is Area 51 and the Greys. What do we know about abduction culture?

Area 51 is a highly classified base, whose secrets make it all the more suspicious. It's surrounded by a no-fly zone, as well as mounted threats warning trespassers that "use of deadly force is authorized." According to many conspiracies, what little we know of Area 51 is just "the tip of a paranormal iceberg."

Allegedly, the base boasts experimentation with alien technology (these technological advancements are only thanks to reverse-engineered alien tech), collaboration with extraterrestrials themselves, among other otherworldly activities.

SETI is always in pursuit of intelligent extraterrestrial life who could produce such tech, so if it's right here on Earth, it makes their job all the easier. If there's anyplace in the United States that hides the existence of extraterrestrials, it's probably Area 51.

Area 51 is a melting pot of scattered theories, but one particularly interesting claim came from two different, alleged former Area 51 employees- and they reported working with an extraterrestrial being. Supposedly, their project

consisted of developing a telepathic translator and cloning alien viruses.

The Grey alien, calling himself "J-Rod", was a friendly one. In interviews with the creature, he claimed that his race initially lived on Earth, prior to human beings. They left because of several natural, planetary issues (i.e. solar flares), but have returned because of a 'lost genetic factor' from the human race. J-Rod also insisted that ideally, their kinds would "hopefully establish a friendship, if possible."

After some time, J-Rod supposedly built a strong friendship with the interviewer, and was granted permission to return to his people. From there, he was taken to Abydos, Egypt, where he disappeared through a "natural star gate," never to be seen nor heard from again.

This desire for friendship may be unexpected, considering the Greys are supposed to be the abductors- the bad guys- in most alien abduction cases. However, if they're trying to recover a lost gene from their DNA sequence, I suppose human abduction and experimentation makes sense.

Don't worry, guys. They're just trying to be friends. Probing isn't such a big deal.

Guess what? Reader, you made it through 3000 words of alien-raving. Congratulations! I might make a conspiracy theorist out of you, yet.

We may never know the truth about extraterrestrials, but whether you believe in them or not, something could always happen within the next century. Never stop looking at the sky. The truth is out there.

For more information about Lana's totally credible sources, check out her article on locomag.com.

Little Debbie Gourmand

A lush, full-course meal consisting of all your favorite intergalactic 90s treats.

Samantha Winston, originally published March 2017

The 90's were a time of fast money, inventive creativity, and foods only a child could love; in school yards across the country children were delighting over prepackaged sweets. Little Debbie was a household name and kids begged for Moon Pies, Star Crunch, and Cosmic Brownies. But were all the snacks we delighted in as children really that good? I took to the table to find out.

The hors d'oeuvres to my carefully-crafted meal consisted of une assiette de Starbursts,each piece still individually wrapped in a waxy colored paper. I separated the fruity chews by color and

started my meal, leaving the strawberry flavoured pieces for last.

The next part of my meal, the entree, came in the form of une tarte aux lunes (a Moon Pie), a delicacy first discovered in 1917. The confectionary, dipped in chocolate with a bold and airy marshmallow center, featured heavy notes of not-quite-graham cracker; I was transported back to my childhood. The Moon Pie was accompanied by a tall glass of water (or two).

The water served as a palate cleanser, after which it was time for the main course. A delicacy for children of the 80s, Star Crunch, was the perfect way to close the meal. The crunch of the chocolate rice crispy was complementary to the soft cloying caramel center. On the side, I had a choice of either a midnight or original Milky Way bar. I chose midnight. The midnight bar was a thing of beauty– the smooth dark chocolate cut through the staggering sweetness. The chocolate malt nougat gave the whole bar a light airy feel while the caramel perfectly accompanied the caramel flavour to the Star Crunch.

Finally, it was time for my favorite part of any meal: dessert!

After a small water break, I hung my head out the window for a few minutes. Then, I was ready. It was time for my childhood favorite: a Cosmic Brownie. The brownie was a chewy fudge-like texture– the packaged chocolate taste blasted me into the past, and the stale flavour from the candy coated chocolate chips really rounded out the dessert.

Between chews of brownie, I gulped down water, and finished off with a good long nap. All in all, my all sweets all the time meal really was Out of This World.

Welcome to the Gayborhood

Or, Why We Should Save the Lesbian Bar

Helen Armstrong, originally published May 2017

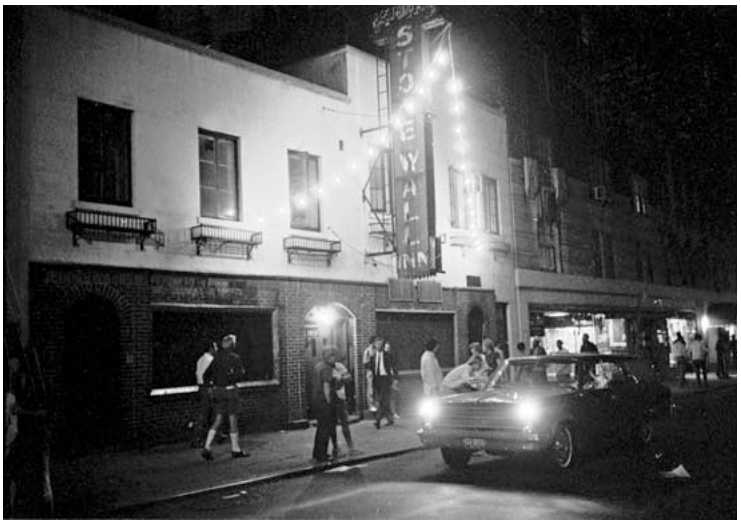
Stand at the intersection of 13th and Locust in Center City Philadelphia. All four crosswalks are painted rainbow, signifying that this is the heart of the Gayborhood. From Pine up through Chestnut in between Broad and 11th, the street signs have rainbows on them. Many businesses display rainbow flags outside, or have proudly stuck a rainbow sticker on their door. Woody's and iCandy, two of the city's biggest gay bars, hang several rainbow and American flags along their fronts. The Gayborhood branch of the Mazzoni Center has a rhinestoned sign in the window that says "HIV TEST" in front of a faded rainbow flag. The bright red doors of the William Way LGBT Community Center swing open.

This is the Gayborhood today. While LGBT people in Philadelphia

don't live in gay paradise by any means, the city is one of the most gay friendly places in the country. Nerd Wallet created a ranking of the most gay friendly cities in America. Their analysis included factors such as the percentage of the population that identifies as LGBT, LGBT-related hate crimes per 10,000 LGBT residents, the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index (which evaluates a city's non-discrimination laws, practices as employer, law enforcement, etc. - Philadelphia received a score of 100 out of 100 in 2016). Nerd Wallet ranked Philadelphia number 6 (behind San Francisco, Portland, Austin, Providence, and Baltimore, in order).

Considering the fact that this is a great city to be gay in, it should come as a shock to hear that there are no lesbian bars in the city. Philly is just one place that's been hit in the nationwide epidemic, as it were, of lesbian bar closures. Across the country, even in cities like Portland and San Francisco, the last lesbian bars are shutting their doors. Too many people dismiss this problem, citing the fact that it's easier to be gay in straight spaces nowadays and that bars aren't necessary for the gay community. While the former is true, the latter is inherently flawed. And here's why: gay bars have always been crucial to the survival of the gay community, and with the passage of laws that granted the community our freedom, we can't kiss goodbye the spaces that were imperative during the fight for that freedom.

But let's go back in time just a bit, to the Stonewall Inn, in 1969.

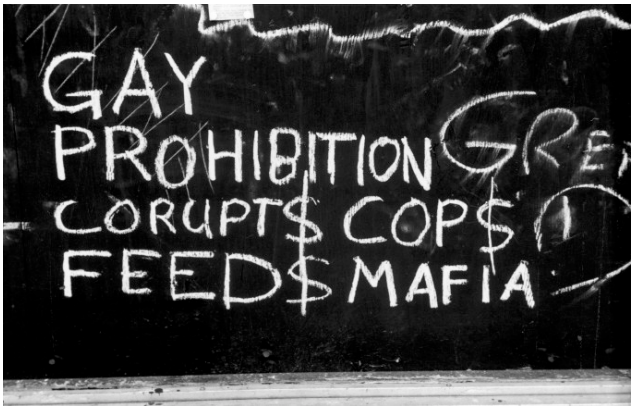


At the time, the American Psychiatric Association classified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Almost all mainstream religions condemned being gay. Sex between two men or two

women was punishable by law and could sometimes carry a lifetime sentence.

New York's police held tightly to the anti-sodomy laws. There were vice squads whose job it was to raid gay bars and set up traps to catch homosexuals. According to PBS, by 1966 "over 10 men a week were arrested as a result of this effort." During a raid, police would come in, turn on the lights, and line everyone up. They would check identification and if you were found without ID or were dressed in drag, you were arrested.

There were lots of gay bars in cities across the country at this time. They were usually dark and dingy, and, in the case of New York City, run by the mob. The mafia capitalized on the fact that gay bars were illegal establishments leaving their patrons with nowhere else to turn. They watered down the drinks, ran prostitution rings, and paid cops to look the other way. The Mafia ran the Stonewall Inn.



The bar was opened in 1967 by the Genovese crime family. It was a hellhole - there were no fire exits, the toilets were constantly overflowing, dirty glasses were washed in a rubber tub of dirty water (which may have caused a 1968 outbreak of hepatitis). It was declared by the New York Hymnal, a gay journal, to be the "tackiest joint in town." And even with Mafia protection, it was still subject to raids.

Another important aspect of the Stonewall Inn: many of the regulars were what Dick Leitsch, the executive director of the Mattachine Society of New York, an early gay rights group, described as "The 'drags' and the 'queens', two groups which would find a chilly reception of barred door at most of the other gay bars and clubs... To a large extent, the club was for

them." He continued by saying, "Another group was even more dependent on the Stonewall: the very young homosexuals and those with no other homes. You've got to be 18 to buy a drink in a bar, and gay life revolved around bars."

So why go? Why subject yourself to a dirty, dark bar where the alcohol was watered down and the police could barge in and arrest you at any minute?

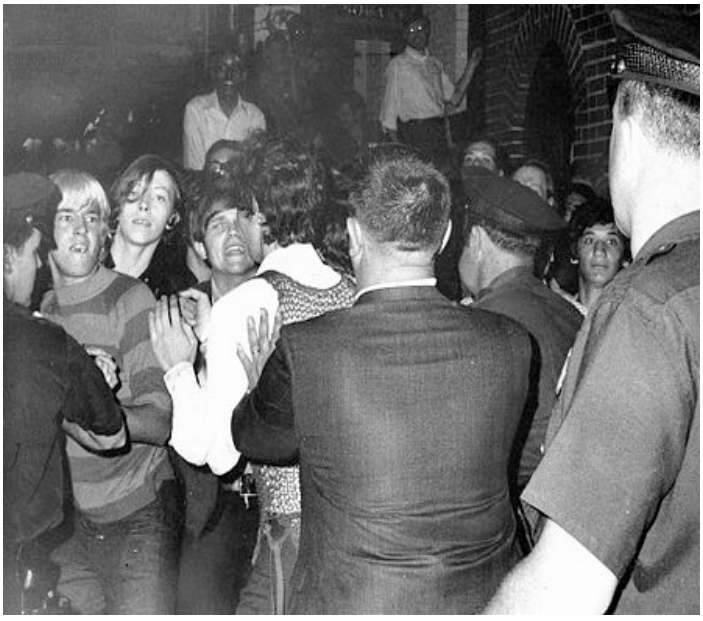
Because there were simply no other options. The choices were stark and simple: live a lie and spend time at 'regular' bars or restaurants dating people you didn't love, or brave the adverse conditions and be yourself. The fact that these places were so unpleasant speaks to their importance at the time, when you could be jailed for having sex with a member of the same sex. It would have been safer to simply avoid these bars altogether - and no doubt countless gay people did just that. Activist Ada Bello, who came to the US from Cuba in the 1950s, lived in Philadelphia during the 50s and 60s. "We considered ourselves good citizens," she told Philadelphia Magazine. "But when it came time to socialize, we had to go to these places that were dark and down alleys... In so many cases, homosexuals had internalized the societal picture of them and were almost apologetic - almost saying, 'We're lucky we're not in jail. We're lucky we actually have places where we can get together and drink.'" The fact that getting together and drinking came at such a risk, and so many decided to do it anyway, speaks to the importance of the gay bar as a space of freedom, in contrast with the oppression of greater society.

For many of the young people who had been kicked out of their homes and had traveled to New York to be a part of the community, the Stonewall was like a home. For the $3 entry fee, they could spend the night inside, safe from the cold, dangerous streets.

"The Stonewall became 'home' to these kids," Leitsch explained. "When it was raided, they fought for it. That, and the fact that they had nothing to lose other than the most tolerant and broadminded

gay place in town, explains why the Stonewall riots were begun, led and spearheaded by 'queens'."

Approximately 200 people were in the bar at 1:20 in the morning on July 28th, 1969 when 8 police officers burst through the doors. A group of 13 people were arrested and taken outside to wait for the patrol wagons, but they hadn't yet arrived. A crowd of about 150 people gathered outside with those arrested. When the first wagon got there, a woman in handcuffs fought with the police as they dragged her toward it. She was hit in the head with a billy club, and reportedly shouted, "Why don't you guys do something!" This sparked an idea - We don't have to take it.



Thanks in part to the Vietnam War protests and the Civil Rights Movement, the spark grew into a flame, and the people gathered started to fight back. They were mostly transgender patrons who forced the police into the bar, where they barricaded themselves. Pause here to appreciate the irony - you have gays and lesbians and transgender folk outside the bar and police cowering inside a "filthy" gay bar. This was a perfectly poetic, chaotic, dangerous, and exciting start of the movement. A group of people pushed over a police car, someone set it on fire. Riot police showed up, started beating people with batons. The patrons of Stonewall fought back. It was the start of a several-day war with police, growing every night as word spread. And that word didn't stop in the Village - it spread throughout the country, where the seeds of the gay rights movement had already been sown.

There's a reason Stonewall happened where and when it did.

That night was the perfect storm

of conditions, set in a place where people who were oppressed under the law had dared to be themselves. The timing was right, and the bravery was already there. But Stonewall - a gay bar, raids, even riots - weren't new. Gay spaces have existed for a long time, and right here in Philadelphia.

In 1908, Xavier Mayne wrote about the use of "vapor-bath establishments" in his book The Intersexes: A History of Simlisexualism as a Problem in Social Life. "New York, Boston, Washington, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Philadelphia are 'homosexual capitals.'" Gay men used to use public baths to have sex with each other because of their relatively private nature, and so they were a gathering and cruising place - which was of course a concern to many heterosexuals. Others, though, had no idea what was going on. Humorously, in 1914, Magnus Hirschfeld wrote, "During a visit to Philadelphia and Boston I noticed almost nothing of homosexuality, but visitors from those cities later assured me that there was 'an awful lot going on' within private circles in these centers of Quakerism and Puritanism." While some choose to see homosexuality as a "new fad" sweeping our nation in the past few decades because of its increased visibility, most people know that homosexuality has always been around and always will be around. And even in the Quaker streets of Philadelphia, it's always been here. There have always been places - be they baths, parks, bars, or all of the above - for gay people to gather.

Because of the guesswork involved, it can be difficult to trace gay history. Much of it involves guess work until the 20th century. Often, the "proof" that we have that any one person was gay is from a conviction such as sodomy. Other pieces of proof include letters written to same-sex friends, but of course, many scholars dispute this as proof out of consideration of the fact that people used to use flowery language to describe just about anything. So no, Alexander Hamilton wasn't confirmed bisexual just because he wrote the following to John Laurens:

"Cold in my professions, warm in my friendships, I wish, my Dear Laurens, it might be in my power, by action rather than words to convince you that I love you."

So it wasn't until after World War II that gay spaces became more than vaporous mysteries and started to take form.

In 1945, Philadelphia was the third largest city in the United States at 2 million residents. It was referred to as the "City of Homes" because of its many residential neighborhoods and apartment buildings. Center City Philadelphia offered apartments and rental rooms for people who wished to remain anonymous and have their privacy, something that wasn't always possible in more rural places. Gay life in the cities experienced a rapid growth during the post-WWII era because so many people were moving to the city for precisely that anonymity that they offered, and for Philadelphia's gay community, they were finding a home in the city of homes. This was west of Broad Street, mostly on Spruce Street. Tom Malim, who lived in Philadelphia at the time, remembers, "There was a saying: 'Do you live on Spruce Street or are you straight?'"

Notably, Rittenhouse Square was a gay center of its own in the 40s and 50s, with the park being a common place for cruising.

In the 40s and 50s, in addition to the park, gay people gathered in bars. It was a place they could go where they felt they could be themselves. Raids were common in Philadelphia, and around the time of Stonewall - in 1968 - Frank Rizzo was elected police commissioner. Rizzo was known for his racism, authoritarianism, and upfront attitude. (No parallels to be drawn here, folks...) He promised to "make Attila the Hun look like a faggot," and between 1968 and 1980, when he served as police commissioner and then mayor, he cracked down on the black community especially. The police knew him as "The General." He led raids on anywhere that housed what he considered to be "undesirables" which included drug dealers, prostitutes, and homosexuals. Gay bars were

commonly raided into the 1980s.

The Venture Inn is one of Philadelphia's oldest gay bars, becoming mostly gay in the 1940s, as confirmed in a 1962 Philadelphia Magazine article about "The Furtive Fraternity," or Philadelphia's gay subculture. The Venture Inn closed in 2016.

"Homosexuals lead a strange twilight life outside the law and outside of society"
-Greater Philadelphia Magazine

These bars were of utmost importance to people who felt same-sex desire and wanted to act on it.

The Allegro was another gay bar. It was a 3 story building with one floor for dancing and another for a quieter piano bar. There was a dress code for male patrons (a jacket and a tie) until the late 60s. One patron recalls that at the time, "The Allegro was really the happening place... I can remember guys with tambourines on the dance floor, and the excitement - we kind of knew that the future was wide open, and there was this kind of pride and pleasure in being gay." Another patron remembers feeling safe on the third floor, because if a raid happened, "you could jump out the third-floor window."

Rusty's was one of the city's first important lesbian bars. It preceded several more that popped up in the 70s and 80s. It was on the second floor of Barone's Variety Room on the corner of Walnut and Quince, and the only way to gain access was to go around to a side door, climb some stairs, and be appraised by Rusty herself. Only women who looked like lesbians were let in. On March 8, 1968, it was raided and the women present were subject to verbal abuse by police officers.

Many organizations were formed during this time to oppose gay rights legislation. One such group was the Neighborhood Crusades, a Christian fundamentalist group. In 1975, the city held a hearing for Bill 1275, which would have added "sexual orientation" to the Human Rights Code. It would have outlawed anti-gay discrimination.

The bill was debated for a year, and at one such hearing, Reverend Melvin Floyd of Neighborhood Crusades said, rather amusingly, "Suppose you call a policeman and the policeman who shows up is a homosexual. There is a man beating you up. You are half-dead on the floor. And the policeman comes in. And the man beating you up turns around and winks at him. They go together and you're half-dead on the floor. You wouldn't like it a bit." No, sir, I would not like it at all. Speaking of being on the floor - six women were beaten by officers at a protest that occurred just after the bill was struck down.

It wasn't just hate groups that formed - the few years after Stonewall ushered in a wave of publications and activism groups. A few of the new publications were Gay Alternative, Weekly Philadelphia Gayzette, and New Gay Life, in addition to a bunch of newsletters. Some of these new groups were called Radical Lesbians, Radical Queens, and the Dyketactics. In contrast with the Reminder Marches, the goal for many of these groups seemed to now be to be loud and proud.

Philadelphia's first gay pride march was held on June 11, 1972. At least half of the march's planners were women, and the reason it was so successful was because of collaboration between gay men and lesbians, who didn't always mesh well during the gay liberation movement. The advertisements for the march featured two intersecting female symbols, two intersecting male symbols, and in the middle, intersecting male and female symbols. That caused a lot of controversy for both gay men and lesbians, both of whom didn't necessarily want to be associated with one another. A newspaper columnist at the time, the Drummer's Greg Lee, wrote, "[this issue] raised the ugly spectre of gay separatism. ...gay women and men MUST work together to effect their liberation."

And the success of the march, where they did work together, just highlights that fact further. Reports differ as far as how many people were there, but most agree that it was at least a thousand - with one

estimate as high as ten thousand.

The purpose of the march, according to the Gay Pride Committee, was "to celebrate the growing sense of pride and unity among gay people and to signal our determination to end the discrimination we face." Ironically - and perhaps a little darkly - Frank Rizzo was praised by the News for allowing the marchers a permit.

The week following the march, other groups planned events such as a film festival, a Gay Pride Festival at Temple, and a picnic at Belmont Plateau.

The Gay Pride March indicates a turning away from the secretive ways of the past, even as public opinion continued to look down on homosexuality. Activist and San Francisco's first gay elected official Harvey Milk urged gay people to come out.

The tide was certainly turning, and especially in Philadelphia, whose business district was so close to the "gay ghetto," coming out was an important and difficult political act. Jeff Escoffier wrote in Gay Alternative, that the "specific social patterns" of Philadelphia "may have kept and still may keep others from joining the movement." This explained why so many activists in Philadelphia weren't native to the area, but rather, had moved there to be involved in the city's gay scene. "Coming out [in Philadelphia] is more difficult than in other, more developed gay communities, [but] the gay movement has taken effect here...evident when thousands of Philly Gays marched down Chestnut Street." He later said that the 1972 Gay Pride march was one of the most "exhilarating things" he's ever done, because of how difficult it was to be anonymous in Philadelphia in comparison to New York.

Walking down the street hand in hand as a same-sex couple was

still dangerous, and kissing or dancing together at a regular bar was out of the question. There was safety in numbers, like at the Pride march, but coming out remained an uncomfortable, scary act. In this climate, gay spaces were unequivocally still important.

In 1973, Giovanni's Room, an LGBT bookstore, opened on South Street. It would become the supplier of most of the AIDS information that Philadelphians received during the AIDS crisis. In 1976, the William Way LGBT Community Center was founded. In 1979, the Mazzoni Center was founded by the Philadelphia Community Health Alternatives (PCHA). It was primarily intended to provide healthcare for the LGBT community. In the 70s and 80s, businesses started to advertise themselves as "gay owned" and "gay friendly." In 1983, the Philadelphia City Council passed the Gay Rights Bill with barely any opposition.

In 1996, Sisters Nightclub opened on Chancellor St.

And in 2013, it closed.

There have been huge leaps made in the march for equality, and Philly is a relatively open and accepting place. For the first time in America's history, same-sex couples can hold hands in public and not face serious consequences.

Thanks to the increased public safety for gay people, some suggest that the reason lesbian bars are fading out is because they aren't needed anymore. These people suggest that there are countless apps and websites for women seeking women, and anyway, queer women can go to regular bars now and not be scrutinized.

But queer spaces are still important for building a community, which is vital for LGBT people. How do we do it? And how do we save

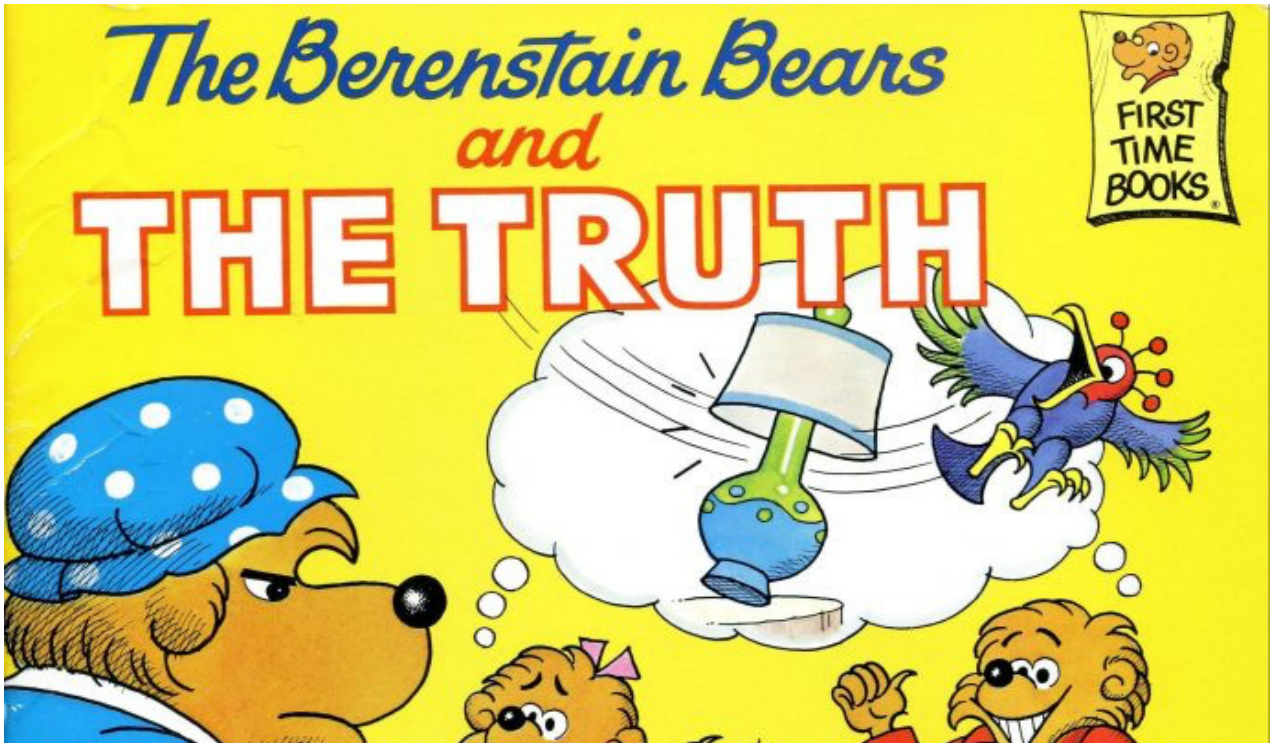
- or perhaps, revive - lesbian bars without alienating people? The subject is surrounded by controversy, and everyone has a theory as to why lesbian bars are closing but gay bars aren't. A lot of these theories have to do with economic differences and the idea that lesbians like to settle down more than gay men. After being heavily involved in the Gay Liberation Movement, though, it seems unfair that lesbians should get the short end of the stick now when it comes to their own spaces.

Valerie Papaya Mann, founder of a group called Sapphire Sapphos, warns, "If we do not create spaces where we can get together and talk and feel like community, then I believe that we will all suffer." Sapphire Sapphos was an organization for African-American lesbians that focused on arts and activism. It faded away when members became more focused on their own areas of interest, rather than towards the group. Papaya Mann, who knows the importance of lesbian spaces and feels the loss of one personally, continues, "I believe that we're already suffering as a result of it, quite frankly. As we age, it's not just losing an opportunity to have somewhere to dance. It's also losing community."

Lorraine Walker Bardsley, who came out in Philadelphia in the 50s, says, "This whole new world of homosexuals...was an exciting experience. The feeling of belonging was heady for I no longer felt alone."

The experiences of the gay community are in many ways fundamentally different from our heterosexual counterparts, and we deserve, even now, that feeling of belonging. As our rights may be challenged in the coming years - and they will be challenged - we need to remember the successes of the past and learn from those who fought for the future we've been given. Change doesn't come free, and it isn't made in the dark. Now that we've burst through the closet door, where do we go from here? Is there a space for us in this world, or do we have to make it?

For the full version of this multimedia article, visit locomag.com.



THE IMPAWSIBLE BERENSTEIN BEARS

The Berenstein Bears? What ever could the name of one of the most iconic bear families be?

Austin Zotomayor, originally published

There are some childhood relics that we simply can't let go of. Call it misplaced nostalgia, but certain aspects of our young lives shouldn't be forgotten and left to crumble in the sands of time. After all, who could forget the first seasons of Pokémon and how that dictated the social hierarchy of our middle-school lives? And who can't help but smile when they remember the fond times when they actually made good episodes of Spongebob? And of course, who can ever forget the lovable, relatable family that were the Beren….stain Bears.

I'm sure most of us have heard of that Berenstain Bears rumor; but to those who aren't aware, there's been some mass controversy

bears. Specifically, a good majority of people remember the spelling to be "Berenstein", as opposed to "Berenstain". Crazy, I know, and probably even a bit miniscule were it not for the fact that this mass memory tampering has become a worldwide phenomenon.

Go right ahead and ask a friend; they'll swear on their life that it's "Stein" and not "Stain". But going through the original 1962 publications of the book, one

According to Stan Berenstain's son, the name has always been said incorrectly, even in his childhood...

can clearly see that it's been spelled "Stain" all this time. So then, were we all just too dumb to read? If that's the case, those books sure did a lousy job of helping us learn morals and whatnot.

According to Stan Berenstain's son, the name has always been said incorrectly, even in his childhood, thanks in part to a know-it-all teacher who insisted the spelling was "Stein". It probably doesn't help that the cartoon produced in the 80's practically pronounced the name "Stein" on a regular basis. Probably cause they thought they knew how to spell too. Seriously, did these books teach anyone how to read?

There have been some other theories on why everyone thinks it's "Stein", the most plausible being a Jewish heritage invoked by both Stan and Jan Berenstain respectively. The story goes that they decided to change the name from "Stein" to "Stain" due to the unfavorable view on Jewish people during the time-frame in which the books were initially published. And that may very well hold water...if it weren't for the fact that the books repeatedly preach Christian morals and views.

While it's true that Stan was indeed Jewish, his wife was Episcopalian and pushed for a more Christian approach regarding the books and their teachings. to get to these planets, (white) western society's

Episcopalian and pushed for a more Christian approach regarding the books and their teachings. So there goes that reasoning out the window, forever to be forgotten like the many who forgot the Berenstain spelling. Of course, there is one more theory circulating out there that could explain all this; the ever popular Mandela Effect.

In short, the Mandela Effect refers to the idea that false memories, such as our elusive "Stein" or "Stain" debacle, are in fact simply glimpses into parallel worlds and alternative timelines. The theory was coined by Fiona Broome who noticed that a lot of people thought Nelson Mandela had died in prison way back in the 80's. Whether that's an issue of the Mandela Effect at work or just people not reading the newspapers again is up to discuss for another time.

Being based on quantum mechanics and considering the strange nature of our world, it's not too much of a stretch to put your money on the Mandela Effect. At some point, a good portion of individuals indirectly crossed over into another universe, this universe, in which the spelling was "Stain" and not "Stein". The "Stein" universe is in fact the original universe these individuals traversed from and are now away from home.

Crazy? Possibly. A bit comical? Oh yes. The best way to describe the Berenstain Bears name fad going around? Most likely because so far, no one has come forth with an actual theory as to why we all just happened to forget the spelling of our wonderful, colorful bear family. And truth be told, we might never know why our memories have been displaced from time. All we can do is hope and pray that maybe, just maybe, we can also forget the horrible, horrible new seasons of Spongebob. Maybe.

THE END OF CASTRO

Eric discusses the death of Fidel Castro and the impact he's directly and inadvertently left behind.

Eric McInnis, originally published Decemeber

(Note: The following opinion is the author's only and does not necessarily represent Loco Mag as a whole)

In the long and grueling year that is 2016, many people known for their brilliance, creativity, and humanitarianism have sadly passed away and have left the earth. But a silver lining that has come from this has been the death of former Cuban president Fidel Castro. After the overthrow of the previous Cuban leader, he had ironically ended up with an even worse legacy than his predecessor. Castro's Communist regime had led to a horrific dictatorship in the country of Cuba; it destroyed their economy, imprisoned homosexuals, and had placed a gigantic trade embargo

with the United States that had only recently been relaxed.

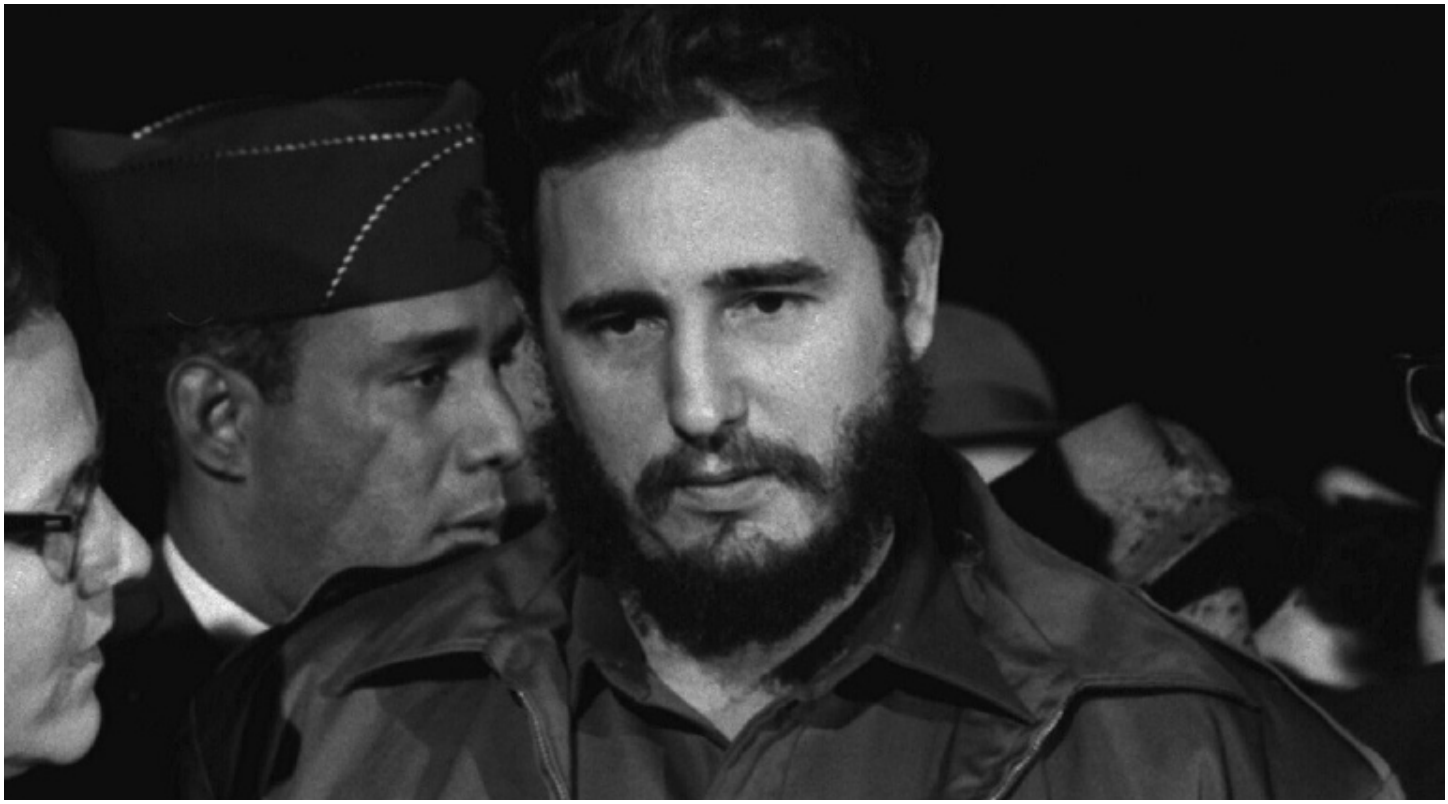
Naturally, the death of such a horrendous human being has been met with much jubilation, as a man who has condoned torture and censored all forms of expression and communication should. However, there is still a small minority of politicians and activists who either find a hint of sympathy or outright glorify Castro. While President Barack Obama's statement doesn't sound so terrible, the concluding paragraph is absolutely ridiculous. Obama states that, "we offer condolences to Fidel Castro's family, and our thoughts and prayers are with the Cuban people," (1) failing to understand that the

Cuban people have been forced to suffer in his regime that consisted of violent censorship and enforcing 20% of his people into exile. Green Party presidential nominee Jill Stein tweeted a salute to Castro, defining him as a, "symbol of the struggle for justice in the shadow of empire," (2) while ignoring the reign of terror that he had created for the country. Justin Trudeau had released a statement that was arguably offensive, as he prattles on with key phrases like, "it is with deep sorrow that I learned today of the death of Cuba's longest serving President," and, "we join the people of Cuba today in mourning the loss of this remarkable leader," (3) implying that Castro was a remarkable leader who cared for the Cuban people. Even Black Lives Matter had issued condolences for the former leader, praising how his revolution should be learned from, ending their statement with the phrase, "Fidel Vive!" (4)

When reading these statements, I felt many different emotions, but most importantly confusion and anger. While I'm all for the importance for diversity of thought and the tolerance of others' opinions, including political, there are some very severe exceptions to that rule and that includes the defense of tyrannical rulers who share no sympathy whatsoever with the people he rules over.

Why are we giving condolences to a man who had incarcerated more of his own people than most dictators? here's a quote that is in a larger font. I'm

Why are we giving condolences to a man who had incarcerated more of his own people than most modern dictators? Why are we giving sorrow for a man who has created a school system that provides indoctrination instead of education? Why should we learn from a man who sponsored terrorism and allied with many of the worst dictators? Why state, "Fidel Vive!" when Fidel was a man who has never apologized for any of the crimes that he had committed nor stood trial for said crimes? It is ridiculous that we are willingly and unironically offering condolences and giving appreciation to a tyrant who had destroyed the economy



and overall living conditions for his entire country. It's even more ridiculous considering that Obama and Trudeau actually offer condolences with the Cuban people. While Cuba is grieving and upset over the loss of their former leader, it's important to remember that Cuba is still run by Fidel Castro's brother Raúl, and many of the ideals that Castro had incorporated in his regime, including the censorship of free speech, are still intact. In Miami, which is home to a large population of Cuban-Americans, there was nothing but jubilation as they came together in Little Havana to celebrate the death of Castro; Cuban-American Isabel

It's absolutely insane that such an inhumane man is being given a pass for what he has done...

De Lara, who was free from the inevitable Castro revolution at the age of 12, explains, "him dying represents the end of something awful that happened to us. It's actually him – not anybody else – who caused this." (5)

What really frustrates me the most however just comes down to the fact that this is likely the first dictator that people have generated sympathy towards. I remember no onewas mourning the loss of Kim Jong-Il, and people have acknowledged that Joseph Stalin was a horrific human being, but we're giving a pass to Castro? And yes, people may say that as a revolutionary he was pragmatic, or that he has given some benefits to Cuba such as free healthcare, but the very simple fact that he has imprisoned the LGBT community, and that he has allied with many other horrific dictators and has been a sponsor for terrorism discounts all of that. It's absolutely insane that such an inhumane man is being given a pass for what he has done, and I don't know if this is just some crazy fluke; but if people end up mourning and sharing condolences for Kim-Jong Un, I'll be absolutely furious and frustrated at such a ridiculous idea.

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4 Matter, Black Lives. "Lessons from Fidel: Black Lives Matter and the Transition of El Comandante." Medium. N.p., 27 Nov. 2016. Web. 18 Dec. 2016.

5 Alvarez, Lizette. "Miami's Cuban Exiles Celebrate Castro's Death." The New York Times. The New York Times, 26 Nov. 2016. Web. 18 Dec. 2016.

The Fear of Death

An attempt to understand and combat the fear of death...

Kirby Sibiski, originally published March 2017

"I'm not really afraid of dying."

This is what my 93 year old grandfather said to me a few weeks ago while returning from breakfast.

I just turned 21, am undergoing an existential crisis, and have thought about the inevitability of death for years. I'm not obsessed with the concept, but one of my favorite songs since middle school has been "Death" by White Lies (so maybe I'm just a bit obsessed).

Naturally, the only response I could muster for my grandfather was, "Really?" At 93, I would have to think thoughts of death are persistent. However, he then said to me, "I've lived a full, happy life, and I have no complaints. The Lord has been good to me."

While I love my grandfather, there is no denying that we have very different worldviews. Whereas he believes in the "Lord," I have no belief in a "higher power." Whereas he's a veteran who's worked hard his whole life, I'm a lazy piece of shit who's accomplished virtually nothing.

So, for those of you who may share a worldview more similar to mine, here are some thoughts on dealing with the fear of death...

Is Death Inevitable?

It seems a bit surprising that in a world where scientists have developed things like segways and nuclear weapons, there has not been more scientific research on the one ailment that affects us all: aging. But this is where Aubrey de Grey comes in...

If you have ever seen Aubrey de Grey, you know that he looks kind of crazy, and if you've ever heard his ideas, you know that they are even crazier.

De Grey is a British researcher on aging. According to TED, "He provocatively proposes that the first human beings who will live to 1,000 years old have already been born." He wants to view the human body like "an engineering problem." He compares the human body to a car: If you take care of a car, take it in for inspection regularly, and replace parts when they start to break down, that car can last a very long time.

While I don't have the scientific background necessary to summarize all of de Grey's work, he helps to develop SENS (Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence) and has identified seven types of aging damage. He put it simply in an interview with Livescience: "What I've done there is I've identified a set of things to fix, a set of aspects of aging that we have some respectable chance to repair, and I've realized that if we can do all of these things reasonably well, then we're done."

While de Grey may believe we can extend life or possibly become immortal, it doesn't seem that many others share his optimism (I'm very skeptical of this idea, just as you probably are). At the moment, unless de Grey and his fellow researchers begin to make some serious strides, it appears that death is inevitable, meaning that, if nothing else, I probably just made your fear worse. But stick with me...

Understanding the Fear

It appears that we must accept the fact that one day we are all going to die. You, me, everyone. Since we can't stop it, maybe we should attempt to understand it.

Napoleon Hill, author of one of the best-selling self-help books of all time, Think and Grow Rich, believed that the fear of death was one of six fears that can cloud our minds, and prevent us from thinking about our desires, which is one of the central tenets of the book (the burning desire to accomplish something, combined with faith that it can be achieved and a few other concepts, will eventually lead to that desire becoming a reality).

Hill believed that the majority of people who feared death did so because of religion. He writes on page 244, "ETERNITY is a long time. FIRE is a terrible thing. The thought of eternal punishment, with fire, not only causes man to fear death, it often causes him to lose his reason. It destroys interest in life and makes happiness impossible."

destroys interest in life and makes happiness impossible."

I'm sure this is true for some, but for me, the fear lies in the first part of Hill's idea: ETERNITY. However, it's not eternal fire and brimstone that I fear, but a very different concept: NOTHINGNESS.

Now the question becomes this: why do I fear an eternity of nothingness? After all, I do love sleeping and being unconscious for hours at a time, and I don't remember the last time I didn't try to extend that state by hitting the snooze button.

This, unfortunately, is a question I don't have the answer to. This is because eternity is an impossible amount of time to comprehend, and being and nothingness are too complex/abstract of concepts for us to truly understand (despite the fact that Satre wrote an essay with that title). The concept of nothingness is made even more difficult to understand, because we can never consciously experience it—after all, if we were conscious, then we would be being.

So it appears that not only is the root of the fear of death different for everyone, but the concepts and ideas that cause this fear may be too complex to even understand, which means we have still made no progress in dealing with the fear. But maybe we can still salvage something beneficial in the final section...

Reframing the Way We Think

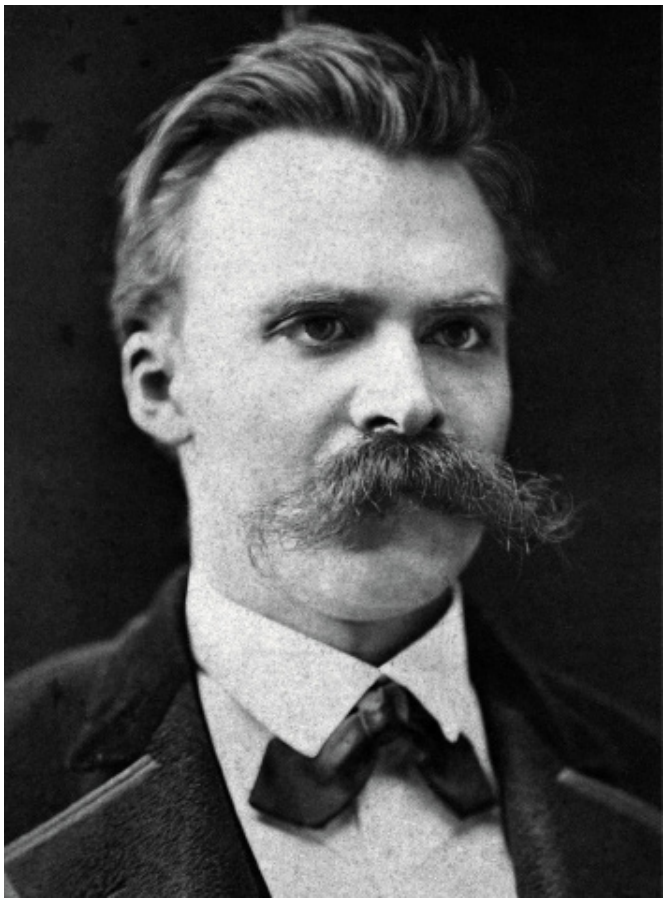
Since we can't stop it and we can't really understand it, perhaps the best way to deal with it is to reframe the way we think about death.

The Christian perception of death is not one of an end, but of a transition. Instead of nothingness, Christians can look forward to an afterlife. This also has repercussions in the way people behave, as those with "good" (Christian) morals go to heaven, while those with "bad" morals go to hell.

If Napoleon Hill was right in that the Christian fear of death stems from fear of an eternity in hell, then it appears that Christianity could be beneficial in our reality: those who behave will not have their mind clouded by thoughts of death, allowing them to focus on their desires instead of their fear and make more money (acquire more power), while those who behave poorly must always be weighed down by their fear, not allowing them to focus on their desires as intensely.

This comfort many "good" Christians can take in their "knowledge" of an afterlife has a few problems for me, however. One of the problems is my long-term disbelief in a God. The other is the distinction between good and bad morals.

I think philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche would agree with my assertion as well. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Nietzsche sees a complicity between morality and the Christian God that perpetuates a life-denying, and so ultimately nihilistic, stance." Rather than create our own morals and use the inherent freedom we were born with, Nietzsche believed that Christianity turned people into "sick animals," going against their natural instincts in order to conform to the Christian values.



One of Nietzsche's goals was to redirect our attention to the reality we are currently living in, as opposed to a focus on an afterlife. To accomplish this, Nietzsche thought of the doctrine of eternal recurrence. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy says that it is "a doctrine that attends to how people of different levels of health are likely to react to the prospect of being reborn, over and over again, to replay life's experience exactly as before in every pleasurable and painful sequence of detail."

Finally, we must realize that death is necessary.

Rather than living life as a way to get to an afterlife which may or may not really exist, Nietzsche encouraged us to focus on our current reality by presenting the idea of living your life the same way an infinite number of times. Scholars have differing opinions as to whether this is a serious metaphysical theory or if it's just an example of a possible worldview one could take, but regardless, it is an idea which can be employed in your life to focus on living in the now, as opposed to fearing the future.

Finally, we must realize that death is necessary. Perhaps the most obvious argument against the desire for immortality is that we simply would not have enough room for everyone. There would not be enough land or resources for everyone. Social progress could not be achieved. Boredom would set in. The list goes on.

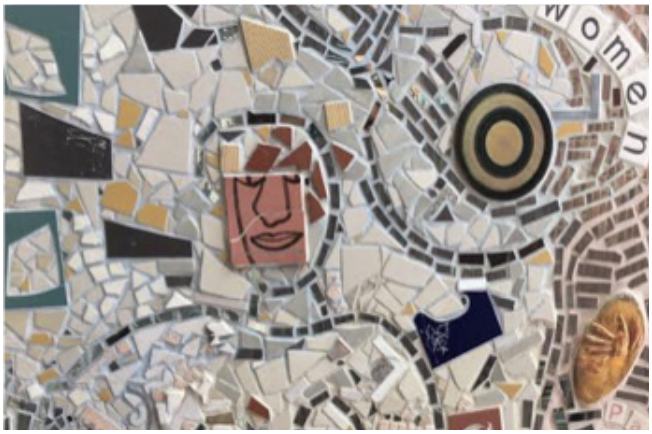
Instead of resisting the inevitable, we must accept this inevitability, and make use of this knowledge by living our current lives to the fullest. Hill writes on page 245 of Think and Grow Rich, "Accept it as a necessity, and pass the thought out of your mind. It must be a, necessity, or it would not come at all. Perhaps it is not as bad as it has been pictured."

More Than a Bookstore: Mostly Books

Literature often takes us into another world, but Callie shows us the places that house these works can too.

Callie Burgoyne, originally published March 2017

Nestled between abandoned buildings and bordered by a wall containing one of Philly's famous mosaic murals on Bainbridge Street, Mostly Books is an independent bookstore with a seemingly infinite supply of literature.



The expansive collection is dispersed throughout the store in what can only be described as organized chaos—pure bliss for an English major like myself.

Walking into the store, you are immediately met with stacks of CDs, DVDs, and VHS tapes. One could easily spend hours browsing these collections alone, never mind the thousands of books categorized by genre in the rooms beyond. In these rooms, I spent hours soaking up strange titles, flipping through books of abstract

art, and picking out more novels than I told myself I was allowed to buy.

Once I made my way to the Fiction and Literature section, I oh-so-stealthily eavesdropped on a conversation between a helpful employee and a wonderfully British customer who had asked for book recommendations. As the employee continuously grabbed personal favorites and tailored recommendations off of the shelves, the English visitor explained that she was on an extended first visit to the city and needed plenty of books to read in her spare time. I'm pretty sure she was just excited about the pound to dollar exchange rate and cheap book prices as I was about her accent—she left with armfuls of reading material, which I myself had to resist doing.

Reading, for many, is all about escaping reality and enterng someone else's story for a while.

In addition to its intriguing customer atmosphere and unique interior of exposed brick, homemade bookshelves, and ancient hardwood flooring, one of the coolest features of Mostly Books is the photo collection. Stored in giant bins in one of the many book rooms, there are thousands of old photographs, depicting everything from the solemn teenage boy refusing to smile for a high school yearbook photo, to a baby showing off a toothless grin for a group of rambunctious women at a dinner party, all raising their wine glasses for the camera. The photo collection is an interesting catalog of decades and is quite entertaining to peruse.

Although old photographs may seem like an odd item to have for sale in a bookstore, I found them to be a weirdly fitting addition. Reading, for many, is all about escaping reality and entering someone else's story for a while. Pouring over the snapshots of fleeting moments in other people's lives provides the same riveting and temporary escape from the world at hand as a novel, allowing you to ponder the past—and maybe have an existential crisis while thinking about how of all of the billions of pictures in the world, this particular photo of this

particular person ended up in this particular used bookshop in Philadelphia for you to stumble upon...or maybe that's just me.

Whether you're looking for a cheap classic novel for English class, a Rom-Com DVD for date night, or a handful of new-to-you CDs to serve as the soundtrack for your next spontaneous road trip, Mostly Books is the place to go. Their friendly staff, interesting customers, and never ending shelves of books won't disappoint.

Talk to Strangers

Reverse every piece of worried advice your parents gave you when you were little.

Kristen Stedman, originally published October

As children, we're told, very vehemently, never to talk to strangers. This comes from a good place in our parent's hearts, and ultimately makes a lot of sense for a small child. There are undoubtedly some dangerous people out there. However, sometimes, this advice can linger with us into our adult lives.

I'm here to tell you why you shouldn't let it.

When you read about travelling, whether it be an article or on social media, there tends to be a very big visual element to it: The scenery, the landmarks, the cobble stone pathways. After this, there is an emphasis on the experiences:

- Swimming with dolphins in the Caribbean
- Riding the London Eye
- Drifting through the canals of Venice

However, though it's talked about, I rarely see as huge of an emphasis about the people met along the way.

To me, these strangers are what make travel worthwhile above everything else.

I have an endless interest in people. There is such a ridiculous number of us in the world, and so many of our stories go untold.

This is despite the fact that each of those stories tends to be unique, dynamic, and complex. Getting the opportunity to see a small snapshot of a person's life, to get to know them for even a second, seems so rare and special.

Our paths crossed, and somehow, we began to speak to one another. That could easily have never happened.

Out of everything I have seen and done in my travels, it is these portraits that have been burned into my memory. Here are just a few of these people that you probably will not meet, and that I probably will not meet again:

Max

I met Max when I was on my way back to Philadelphia after a weekend at home in New York City. I boarded my Greyhound bus, plonked down near the back, and decided to allow myself a few blissful minutes of looking out the window before starting a reading for class.

Then an older man waltzes onto the bus. He has neat gray hair, a bushy mustache, and round wire glasses. He's a little small, with a grey woolen coat and a little brown briefcase. The first thing that struck me about him was that he asked if he could sit down next to me, something which nobody has done before.

I mentioned this to him, and that sparked a conversation which lasted the entire two-hour bus ride. He worked as a lawyer for thirty years in Philadelphia, but

now he's retired and living in the Caribbean with his partner, whom he had been separated from for about fifteen years.

He wishes that he had pursued working in history instead, but is content because he worked with an archival group in his hometown. We discussed the type of weather we preferred, cities we had lived in and been to, politics, what life in the Caribbean is even like, the monkey epidemic, hobbies, and more.

I found out that he was only even back in America for two weeks, and that he was heading towards his last stop, visiting his mom in Philadelphia. He said he had somebody who insisted on picking him up at the bus stop, but that person didn't answer the phone.

We exchanged names at the very last moment, when our bus was pulling into the terminal.

. . .

Amanda & Jill

I met these two girls during a time of sheer darkness and panic. It was a late, foggy night in Amsterdam. My two friends and I nervously arrived at the parking lot that we had been dropped off in a little over a day beforehand. We were six eyes scattering rows of empty buses, trying to find one that could be ours. Doubts began to form.

What if we missed it? What if the bus actually isn't here? What if it is, but we can't find it? Then, nearby, we spot two girls who look just as apprehensive and confused as us.

Once we spot one another, the attraction is magnetic. We band together, discussing our concerns, the comedy of this situation, and our separate experiences in Amsterdam. Those two had a much more eventful experience than we had.

They opted for a super cheap hostel located in the Red Light District, and you can imagine what kind of shenanigans that sets one up for. Drunken, creepy guys wandering the streets and into the hostel. Old ladies who steal your purse while you use the bathroom. Various drugs scattered about the floors of the hallways.

Suddenly, my group was grateful that our biggest setback had been spending two hours trying to find the Anne Frank house.

Nonetheless, those girls were kind and hilarious, with a serious talent for storytelling. We didn't talk anymore after we finally boarded the bus, but we wished each other well when we got off in Brussels, 10 hours later.

In these exchanges, there's an unspoken agreement: Let's not keep in touch.

Allai

I met Allai when I was hopelessly lost in China.

My group from class was spending a couple of days at Jiangsu University, and we had just been very rebellious and left a restaurant with a speaker we had met just the day prior.

He took us to a nearby supermarket, and recommended all different kinds of candies and snacks that we couldn't read. Many of them were delicious. However, I was a little slow in my decision making, and was therefore one of the last people on line. When I finally got out, I saw the group I had been with walking rather far up ahead of me.

Instead of running, or calling out to them, I figured that I would not lose sight of them, as they were a rather large group. This was apparently not the case. They rounded a corner, and by the time I got there, I was met with a path which split in four directions. Oh no.

I realized then that my phone wasn't working, nor did I remember how to get back to our housing. While I knew staying in one place was probably the safest decision, I was determined to get back on my own. So I asked for help.

This is where Allai comes in. A junior business student from Pakistan, Allai and I talked about our academics, why we were both in China, and most importantly, my very precarious situation. He was patient with me, and obviously kind. He took the time out of his lunch break to try and help me find my way.

When he finally suggested that it may be best for me to go to a help desk, I was found by a frustrated student leader from my group.

To Allai, I said a hasty thank you, good luck, and goodbye.

. . .

In all of this, there's a little bit of sadness looming just on the edges. I'm rapdily forgetting these people, the details getting fuzzier each day. It's only their stories, and our interactions, which endure.

Though it may be a little bit wistful, what these experienes show me is that there can still be mystery in a world that is increasingly populated, connected, and explored.

On social media, we tend to keep up with what everyone is doing in real time, all the time. Having these standalone moments with strangers is comparatively rare.

In these exchanges, there's an unspoken agreement:

Let's not keep in touch.

No exchange of phone numbers, Twitter handles, or Snapchat codes. No photographs which we can reference again. No getting to know one another more. We only have that moment.

Always Gonna Be Our American Idiot: Green Day

We mean that in the most loving way possible. Here's a brief overview of one of America's favorite bands.

Sophie Carroll, originally published May 2017

From the bratty punks performing on Gilman Street to the elder punk rock statesmen selling out arenas worldwide, Green Day has surely made a name for themselves over the years.

There's no denying the influence Green Day has had on the punk rock/ pop punk scene, as bands like Blink 182, Paramore, 5 Seconds of Summer, All Time Low, and Simple Plan have all acknowledged that the trio has had an impact on their music. With 12 albums, 4 grammys under their belt and a place in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Green Day has become one of the first rock bands to matter- matter to the world of punk rock and matter to me.

Starting out at the ages of 14, both Billie Joe Armstrong and Mike Dirnt formed Sweet Children that would later become Green Day.

The name Green Day?

Yeah, it came from the band's fondness of marijuana.

Green Day put out their first album 39/Smooth in 1990 which was followed by the 1991 album, *Kerplunk*, that also introduced Tre

Cool as Green Day's permanent drummer. *Kerplunk* was a breakthrough album for the trio, gaining attention from several major record labels including Reprise Records, who would eventually sign the band and produce their remaining albums till present day.

Once signing to a major record label, there was no going back, as word spread amongst the punks that first embraced the band during their early years performing at 924 Gilman Street. The scene kids had accused Green Day of selling out and made their feelings known when hardly anybody showed up to Green Day's final appearance at Gilman Street. Their own stomping ground was now a place where the band was no longer welcomed.

Supporters turned their backs to them and Gilman Street banned Green Day. The riff that Green Day's relationship with Reprise caused in the punk scene was inevitable, but what was to come took the Berkeley natives for the ride of their lives- a ride they'd be on for the next 23 years and counting.

Dookie. If you've never heard of the album you're probably living under a rock, plain and simple. Green Day's first album produced under Reprise Records reached No. 2 in the U.S. Billboard 200 and charted in seven

countries. The band had gone from local punk outcasts to having their singles played on MTV airplay. Later that year Green Day won their first Grammy for Best Alternative Music Performance, proclaiming the next generation of punk.

Years went by, and Green Day's success continued to grow, but only for so long.

By 2001, the band was nearing the option of parting ways after failing to communicate. Before calling it quits, the three members decided to work on their issues in hopes that it would salvage the passion that once drove the band.

From then on, Green Day began to track their next album titled *Cigarettes and Valentines* when, suddenly, the tracks went missing.

Their own stomping ground was now a place where the band was no longer welcomed.

Some things happen for a reason. What does a band do when they have to start all over from scratch? They jot down whatever comes to mind and connect the dots from there- which is exactly what Green Day did, but with a twist. What was that twist? Add an inspiration of the political events circling the United States and with that came Green Day's rock opera, *American Idiot*.

"Don't wanna be an American idiot/ Don't want a nation under the new media / And can you hear the sound of hysteria? / The subliminal mind-fuck America"
-American Idiot, Green Day.

The opening verse of the title track was played constantly, commanding the ears of listeners of the radio and dominating airplay on video channels.

This shift in sound and attitude allowed for a punk mentality told through a rock album more openly accessible to the public, a public who happened to be living in a post 9/11 era looking for a scapegoat. People wanted to let loose from the stress of the day-to-day pressures presented in a time of mass paranoia and overwrought propaganda.

Green Day's rock opera was just what the public needed.

The album would eventually sell over 16 million copies and result into a Broadway musical from 2010- 2011, where Billie Joe Armstrong would perform as the role of St. Jimmy on occasion.

How do you follow up the success of a rock opera? You make a second rock opera. And that's exactly what Green Day did.

21st Century Breakdown is the band's best chart performance to date as copies of the album sold reached over 4 million worldwide. The album led to a seven leg tour around the globe as fans by the thousands came to see the band perform their new and old hits. (Sidenote: Green Day does put on an amazing show, I know from experience, so if you have the opportunity one day you should see them).

After 21st Century Breakdown, Green Day took a hiatus to focus on their personal lives before announcing that they were working on a trilogy titled *Uno, Dos, Tre*. Sometimes the third time isn't always the best.

Uno, Dos, Tre were released in a span of 72 days after Armstrong announced he was going into treatment for substance abuse following an outburst at the 2012 iHeartRadio Music Festival. The albums were a bust compared to Green Day's previous records and honestly it's best just to ignore that those albums were released.

Thankfully, we had *Revolution Radio* to save the day. Green Day's current album released in 2016. The album debuted at No. 1 on Billboard 200 and proved that the Berkley trio still has what it takes.

Whether you consider them punk, rock, or sellouts you can't ignore Green Day's presences in the music scene. Twenty years into their career and their music is capable of pulling in new fans, people to listen to their songs for the first time and ignite a passion for music in their hearts. That's exactly what Green Day did for me.

It all started with a concert ticket. My mom was sitting at the computer browsing through Ticketmaster for who knows what when she had out of the blue asked my two brothers and I

if we wanted to see Green Day.

Green Day? The band that played the American Idiot song? The singer wears eyeliner. That was the jist of my knowledge about the band before that day.

After that day- let's just say I became a full out Green Day expert. It might've been the fact that I wanted to know the songs I'd be hearing live that summer at the Wachovia Spectrum in Philadelphia that stemmed my- well obsession- but nonetheless it resulted in Green Day playing a large role in my life and shaping who I am today.

Throughout my entire middle school and first half of my high school career my life revolved around anything and everything Green Day. Yeah, I was one of those mega-fangirls, and I'm not ashamed of it. If I wasn't waiting outside concert venues hours before doors open just to listen to Green Day's soundtrack or begging my mom to take me back to see *American Idiot* on Broadway for the fourth time,

I was usually taping more posters to my bedroom walls or discussing the latest Green Day news, like Tre Cool's most recent hair color, with other fans on message boards. *How long can this phase go on?* I'm sure that's what my parents were asking themselves. Sooner or later, though, the thrill always dies down.

Yeah, I was one of those mega-fangirls, and I'm not ashamed of it.

There was no way I could continue to be an ultimate fangirl for the rest of my days, I had to one day find a common ground with my love for

this band. After the trilogy of *Uno, Dos, and Tre*, I was left confused and disappointed. It was at that point where I began to notice myself slowly moving away from my crazy Green Day fangirl phase- sad, yet much needed.

Despite not being a mega-fan anymore, I can never deny the impact Green Day has had on my life. Listening to their music opened my eyes up to a genre of music that would impact my life in ways I never thought possible. I went from the girl who looked forward to the next Phillies' game she'd go to to the girl who waiting outside a concert venue 10 hours before doors opened just to maybe catch a glimpse of a band member.

game she'd go to the girl who waiting outside a concert venue 10 hours before doors opened just to maybe catch a glimpse of a band member.

When I was younger, I pictured myself becoming a teacher until I realized I was more passionate about music than anything else, so a career in music management it was.

Music is one powerful thing. Whether the tracks were released decades ago or last week, that musician's work is going to relate to somebody somehow and inspire them in ways they'd never expect.

Thirty-one years as a band and Green Day is still releasing music and inspiring those young and old in various ways. Sure, sometimes the material isn't as great as previous work, and some fans might feel let down, but what matters is that they're releasing material they want.

It may not relate or speak to you, but to someone else, it might.

On a personal note, I owe a lot of who I am and aspire to be to this band and their music. They were my first of many things- first concert, first album I bought with my own money, Billie Joe was my first celebrity crush (Who doesn't love a tatted up guy with eyeliner, right?), and first band who made me realize life doesn't always suck.

The three punks from Berkeley, California that were rejected by their own local scene are now playing their music for people all around the world and I doubt they'll be stopping any time soon.